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## **The Rising Size and Complexity of the Patent Document**

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## **The Rising Size and Complexity of the Patent Document**

Dennis Crouch

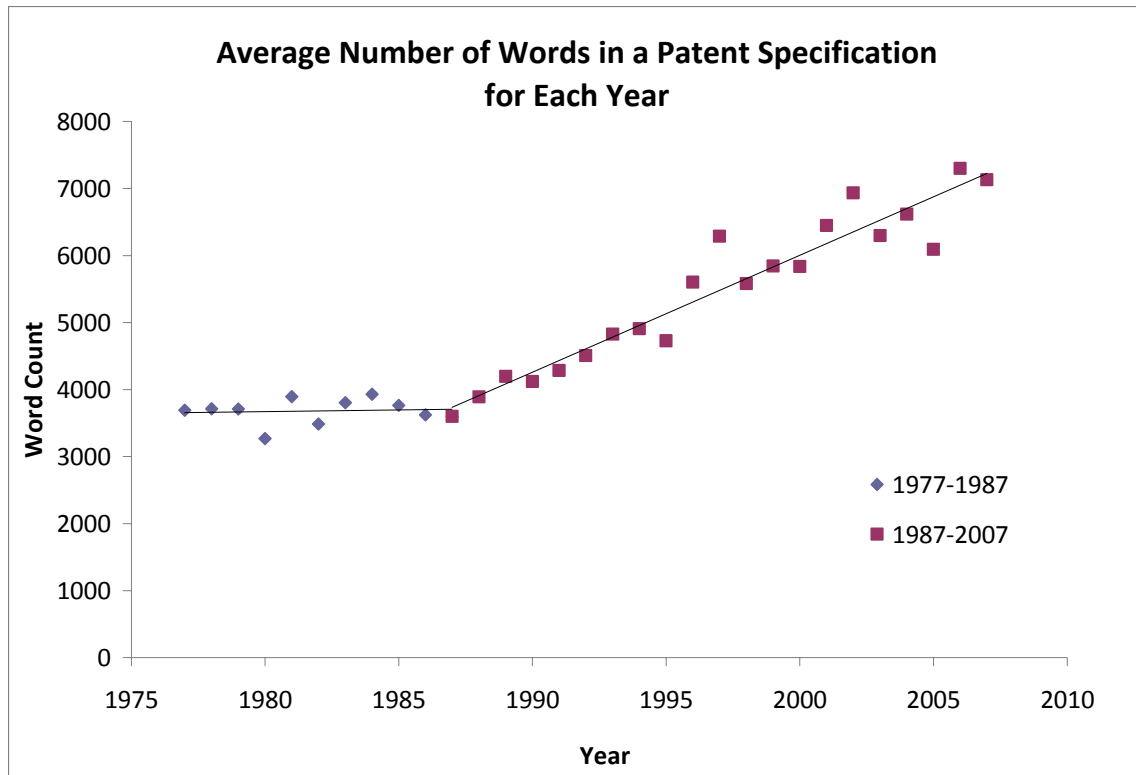
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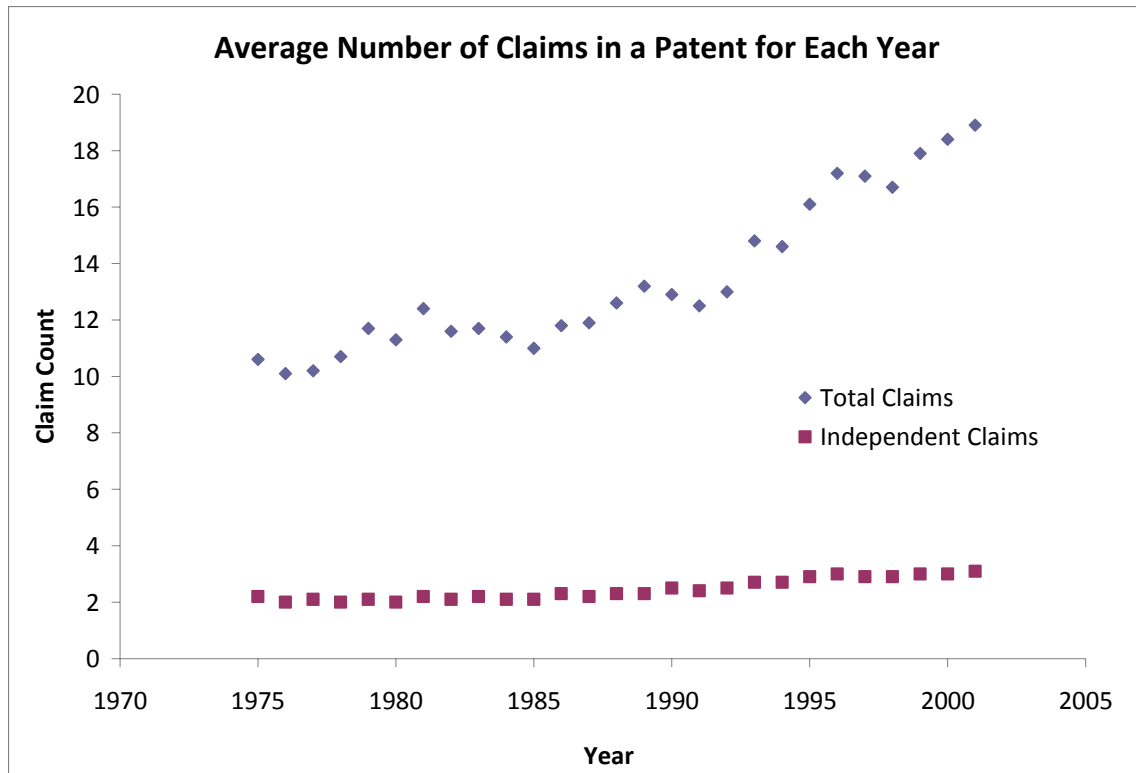
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The above word count chart shows the results of a study of 10,000 U.S. patents issued between January 1977 and December 2007. Using a software algorithm, I counted the number of words in the description portion of each patent. This excludes claims, title, abstract, references, and other identifying information. To amplify the results, I added two trend-lines. The first trend-line runs from 1977 to 1987 and has essentially no slope — indicating that the length of patents remained steady over those years. The second trend-line runs from 1987 – 2007 and has a clearly positive trend-line indicating that the number of words is increasing over time. Because of the large sample size, I am very confident (99.9% CI) that the average patent length has been steadily increasing.

For further information, See Dennis Crouch, *Does Size Matter? Counting Words in Patent Specifications*, PATENTLY-O (Dec. 20, 2007) online at <http://www.patentlyo.com/patent/2007/12/does-size-matte.html>.



The above claim count chart shows the result of a study of 28,000 U.S. patents issued between January 1977 and December 2005. Each patent has at least one “independent claim” and may include additional “dependent claims.” Using a software algorithm, I counted the number of total claims and also independent claims for each patent. Because of the large sample size, I am very confident (99.9% CI) that the average number of both total claims and independent claims are increasing over time. The chart shows this result for total claims. The chart’s scale may mask the similar trend showing that independent claims have increased by almost 50% over the 28 year time period.

It is important to recognize that the above results are directed to issued claims. In most cases, patent applications originally include even more claims that are then cancelled during the examination process.

For further information, See Dennis Crouch, *Rising Claim Counts*, PATENTLY-O (Dec. 23, 2007) at <http://www.patentlyo.com/patent/2007/12/rising-claim-co.html>.